

## **Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission Meeting**

**Wednesday June 24, 2015**

**Commission Members:** Barbara Fuqua, David Hummons, Lily Kleinlein, Dianne Shewmaker

**Associates:** Debra Vance **Staff:** Michael Shermis

We began the meeting at 5:33. David led the meeting in Nicole's absence.

**Minutes:** David made a motion to approve the May minutes with one change ("Next Year's Speaker" instead of "New Year's Speaker"), Barbara seconded, all approved.

**Treasurer Report:** Michael updated that the total is the same as last month: \$5,422.20.

### **Old Business:**

**Newsletter Feature Volunteer:** Lily volunteered to be the featured volunteer for the July newsletter.

**Bylaws:** We reviewed the bylaws, which are fairly standard across all commissions. David suggested moving the elections until February. Last month we discussed moving it to December so the new Chair could welcome in the New Year, but David thinks this would be disruptive timing because our event is in January. Michael said it could be problematic if the current Chair weren't reappointed, and then we wouldn't have a Chair for the event. David proposed Article 3, Section 2 be changed to state that our annual meeting is held in February, and this is the meeting in which we hold elections.

Barbara asked if Article 2, Section 6 should specify how much notice we need to give in order to resign from an office, and how soon after we would hold an election for the replacement. Michael suggested we only hold a new election if the person gives a week's advance notice. After some discussion, we decided to keep the section as is.

Lily asked about Article 2, Section 2. She has been secretary for more than 2 terms and this section says there is a 2 term limit on holding an office. All agreed that this is a recommendation, not an absolute requirement. Everyone agreed that while it is beneficial to have a new Chair/Vice Chair every 2 years, if the current Secretary is willing, and no one objects, this office could be held for longer as it is one that not many people are interested in holding.

David motioned to approve the amended bylaws, after changing Article 3, Section 2 about the election and annual meeting. Barbara seconded. All approved.

**Name Badges:** Michael brought name badges for us to use at events. They are generic with "Commissioner" rather than our individual names so they can be used for many years. Michael said we could take them home, or he could bring them to each event for us to wear. If someone takes a name badge, they must return it upon resigning from the commission.

### **New Business:**

**Power of Words Update:** Michael is still working with the schools to set the dates, and then Beverly is going to work with our "Living Legends" to get them involved. Books have been ordered. From the beginning, Wisdom Circles was a suggested format for our event. Even though we presented this idea, the schools set their own structure and told us what they want the event agenda to be. They prefer something more like a book discussion and Q+A Assembly. Wisdom Circles are more like a facilitated

small group with an “elder” expert who talks about their personal experiences living in the era, and the facilitator makes sure everyone has a chance to talk. It was decided this is not best for a large group at the schools. The Wisdom Circles will now be done in other contexts. Michael is going to do a general call-out for Wisdom Circles related to certain topics, and any organization or individual in the community can help coordinate, host, be the “expert,” or facilitate a circle on a variety of topics. We are going to let the public decide what topics they are excited about. The City is going to do a Wisdom Circle (probably on Civic Engagement or Political Activism).

The Power of Words Website is up and looking great, and the group is working on fundraising.

**Next Year’s Theme/Speaker:** Janae Nelson led Michael to believe it was going to be an easy/smooth process to move forward when we voted to ask her to speak, but the latest response was that she can’t decide at this time whether she can commit. They didn’t elaborate on what this means and Michael wasn’t able to speak to her personally. David thinks she talks too much like a lawyer, too clinical. David suggested Myrlie Evers but Michael said that she was on our original list and her rate was \$20,000.

Michael handed out 3 bios which were suggestions from Nicole. Marie Johns (a past year suggestion), Brittany Packnett, and Carmen Perez. Michael was really impressed with Carmen Perez’s work. Perez is an actress/singer/songwriter but ALSO has a deep and established history of work with advocacy and civil rights. Packnett has been highly involved with the activism in Ferguson, MO. Michael hasn’t asked about pricing, video, etc... but the commissioners were interested in finding out if they would be available, interested, cost, etc... Particularly the two young women would bring a new perspective and a young voice which we haven’t had in recent years.

#### **2016 MLK Day Event Planning:**

**Volunteer Ushers:** Nicole is working on this, but was unable to attend the meeting.

**Video Contest:** The video contest was left up in the air after the last meeting. We all agreed to move forward since this is Michael’s first year as our rep, and he will work early in the year to build commitment from schools. If we have another year with lack of interest, we will reconsider next time.

**Liaison Reports: NAACP:** Diane and Debra updated that the NAACP became a Gold Sponsor for the Power of Words. Debra was voted as the State Education Chair. August the 15<sup>th</sup> is the State Education Summit. The Freedom Fund Banquet will be October 10 at the Convention Center. Diane also said she has a large, framed, photo of Martin Luther King, Jr. She is willing to let us use it for our events in January. Michael said it would be great in our display case in January.

**Commission on the Status of Black Males:** David shared several updates. The Commission works on disparities in education, health, criminal justice, and employment for (in particular) young black males. They’ve decided they need a signature initiative each year. Next year’s initiative will be Minority Health (including all minorities, and a wide scope of what “health” means). At their last meeting, they discussed an initiative that has started in our area related to Indiana Juvenile Detention Alternatives. It is a task force to identify youth who might not already be “in the system,” but are on track to get into trouble in the future. They are working on ideas to help them before they get in trouble- preventing juvenile delinquency in at-risk youth. Several years ago the commission was involved with a thorough study of racial disparities in our criminal justice system, and this is a preventative program related to the outcomes of that study/task force. David thinks it would be nice to do a collaborative educational

program (speaker, panel, etc...) with the Commission on the Status of Black Males, NAACP, etc... in the future.

**Announcements:** None.

Meeting adjourned at 6:22.